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## TARA LOLLER

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION  
MANAGER FOR THE HSUS  
STOP PUPPY MILLS CAMPAIGN  
// BY RACHEL CIERI

**LIFE UNDERCOVER:** In the movies, undercover agents pose as billionaires or mobsters to get to the heart of a crime ring. Tara Loller's approach was less glamorous but just as effective. Her cover: indecisive new mom.

As a humane officer for the Pennsylvania SPCA, Loller did everything she could to get an inside look at suspected puppy mills in Philadelphia and Lancaster counties. "I'd say my dog recently passed and I didn't know if I wanted a big dog or a little dog."

In reality, Loller knew large and small dogs would be kept in separate areas, and the more of the facility she saw, the better her chances of spotting signs of cruelty that would lead to a warrant.

**CHANGING DIRECTION:** Loller's career in animal protection started more than a decade ago at the prompting of Howard Nelson, then-CEO of the Pennsylvania SPCA. She was a teacher at the time, simply volunteering at the shelter. But Nelson recognized her special connection with animals and convinced her to change careers. As a humane officer, she received training in law and animal handling, and she helped district attorneys prosecute animal cruelty cases.

Puppy mill cases became her No. 1 love. "When I first started going in undercover nearly a decade ago, it had a lasting impact on me," she says. "Seeing hundreds of little heads popping up in rabbit hutch-style cages, with no socialization, no love, no vet care, no chance of getting out really weighed heavy on my heart."

Loller joined The HSUS in 2010 as a member of the Animal Rescue Team. She braved floods, tornadoes and other man-made and natural disasters, calling on her training in technical rope rescue, swift water rescue and large animal rescue to save lives.

**NATIONAL IMPACT:** Last year, Loller's passion for ending puppy mills led her to champion the cause on a national level. As policy implementation manager for the Stop Puppy Mills Campaign, she connects with state agencies and law enforcement departments to help them properly enforce puppy mill laws.

In Pennsylvania, Loller discovered that budget cuts prevented law enforcement from getting the proper equipment for puppy mill investigations. So she created an online registry that allowed HSUS supporters to purchase more than \$50,000 in equipment, including items that gauge ammonia levels and humidity in a facility.

In Wisconsin, she learned that many police departments didn't understand how to pursue puppy mill cases and didn't have the funding for the requisite training. Loller rallied HSUS donors to sponsor training for officers in more than 25 counties.

She's now helping to implement puppy mill laws in other states across the country. "I love that my job has a direct impact on the welfare of animals," she says. "I'm making great connections with inspectors and building rapport so we can work as a team."



KATHY MILANI/THE HSUS